



Media information, 31 May 2016

Farming partnerships gear up for growth

More than 120 farming women are amongst the latest graduates of a national programme to increase profitability and productivity in the red meat sector through building farming partnerships.

Developed and delivered by the Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT), Understanding Your Farming Business (UYFB) empowers women to view themselves and their farming roles differently, while building their technical and communication skills.

The four-month programme is funded by the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP), a Primary Growth Partnership programme, which coordinates sheep and beef industry and government efforts to develop, test and introduce new ideas, technology and ways of working.

Following the success of the UYFB pilot in 2014 and a national RMPP-funded rollout to 140 women last year, the programme has been extended to reach another 240 women in 14 regions this year.

“This targeted development of women in sheep and beef farming partnerships is designed to increasing profitability and strengthen the farming partnership, giving farmers more control over their futures,” AWDT founder and executive director Lindy Nelson said.

“By taking a greater role in decision making, and applying new business, communication and change-making skills, these women are creating opportunities to lift farm performance in a challenging farming landscape.

Independent research by UMR Research released last month strongly correlated the business contribution of the female farming partner with the characteristics of high-performing farms.

Undertaken for the RMPP, the research involved more than 1,000 sheep and beef farmers throughout New Zealand. It defined five farmer types according to their openness and resistance to change and also found that in all but one of the types, women were key to initiating and supporting on-farm change.

Michael Smith, General Manager, Red Meat Profit Partnership, said: “There’s no doubt women play a key role in farming businesses across New Zealand. However, we believe that with the right practical support and learning, they can play an even greater role and ultimately improve the productivity and profitability of the red meat sector.

“We’re working to develop and grow the business skills of both men and women within the farming partnership – and attract the next generation of top talent. This initiative is a good example of the wide range of formal and informal learning going on, powered by RMPP.”

Independent research specific to UYFB is now underway that will provide a measure of how the programme influences on-farm behavior with results expected in early 2017.

In preliminary findings participants rated the programme highly, citing the top four reasons to be useful which were relevant content, helpful tutors, networking with other women, and confidence to ask questions and make contributions in their businesses.

By the end of this year more than 450 sheep and beef farming women throughout New Zealand will have completed the programme. Strong demand for places has seen the remaining five programmes this year almost fully-subscribed.

Places are still available on Rotorua, National Park and Gisborne programmes. Further details are available at www.awdt.org.nz.

ends

Background

Since its establishment in 2010, AWDT has delivered leadership, governance and business training and support to more than 1,400 people throughout New Zealand. It provides a trusted and enabling environment for all women in agriculture to realise their potential and grow the agriculture sector.

The Red Meat Profit Partnership is a \$64 million, seven-year programme aimed at achieving long-term, sustainable improvements in the sector.

The RMPP is a Primary Growth Partnership programme between the Ministry for Primary Industries, Alliance Group, ANZCO Foods, ANZ Bank, Beef and Lamb New Zealand Limited (representing sheep and beef farmers), Blue Sky Meats, Greenlea Premier Meats, Progressive Meats, Rabobank, and Silver Fern Farms.

Further information can be found at www.rmpp.co.nz and www.awdt.org.nz